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Religious architecture had been a major topic of conversation throughout history, but it grew between the fourteen-hundreds and the seventeen-hundreds. Though religious architecture had not directly shifted the course of history, it was revolutionized by the course of history through various architectural styles and places of worship. These architectural styles reveal the impact of significant events during the time period and how religious architecture was shaped because of said events. Ultimately, religious architecture reveals the impact of the major events of early modern Europe through the appearance of clandestine churches during the Dutch Revolution, the architectural makeover of Catholic churches during the Counter-Reformation, and the establishment of Renaissance architecture through the construction of the Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Foire as a result of tragic historical events.

The Protestant Reformation (1517-1648) was regarded as one of the largest movements of widespread Christianity across Europe during 1517 when Martin Luther supposedly nailed his

95 Theses on the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church.[1] The Reformation did not go without resistance, as the Counter-Reformation (1545-1781), with its beginnings being birthed from the Council of Trent, was created as a Catholic force to counter the Protestantism across Europe.[2] The Reformation was not driven by one singular battle but instead consisted of multiple smaller conflicts that lasted the duration of the Reformation—an example of this would be the Dutch Revolt, otherwise known as the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648).[3] The battle between the Dutch Republic and Spain impeded on the variety of religions and beliefs that were set in the Netherlands. Though the Netherlands was primarily Protestant, the country also had Mennonites, Lutherans, and Jewish citizens as well. Each of these groups had their own places of worship—the Jewish people had places like the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam, the Mennonites had a renovated brewery named Singelkerk, and the Lutherans had the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Haarlem.[6] Places of worship like the Portuguese Synagogue were built with gable roofs, wooden pilasters and flying buttresses for both the congregation and the church attendees.[7] These characteristics of architectural design were a result of the impact that Gothic architecture had during early modern Europe—Gothic architecture was the major form of architecture from the end of medieval Europe till the late sixteen-hundreds.[8] Author John Fitchen expressed Gothic

[1] Leslie P. Spelman, "Luther and the Arts," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 10, no. 2 (1951): 166, doi:10.2307/426851.
[2] Wolfgang Reinhard, "Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and the Early Modern State a Reassessment," *The Catholic Historical Review* 75, no. 3 (1989): 395, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25023084.
[3] Benjamin J. Kaplan, "Fictions of Privacy: House Chapels and the Spatial Accommodation of Religious Dissent in Early Modern Europe," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 4 (2002): 1034, doi:10.1086/532663.
[6] Julie-Marthe Cohen, "The Migration of Ceremonial Objects: The Case of the Amsterdam Portuguese Jewish Torah Mantle." *Studia Rosenthaliana* 35, no. 2 (2001): 200, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41482454; Nancy R. Heisey, "Pilgrimage, Place, and People: A History of the Locations of Mennonite World Conference Assemblies, 1925-2003," *Church History* 75, no. 4 (2006): 859, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27644873; Benjamin J. Kaplan, "'Remnants of the Papal Yoke': Apathy and Opposition in the Dutch Reformation," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 25, no. 3 (1994): 655, doi:10.2307/2542640.
[7] Helen Rosenau, "The Synagogue and Protestant Church Architecture," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 4, no. 1/2 (1940): 80. doi:10.2307/750124.
[8] John Fitchen, *The Construction of Gothic Cathedrals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), vii.

architecture as a "subject […] of interest not only to the professional architect and engineer but also […] to the art historian."[9] Fitchen wanted to get across the importance that Gothic architecture was not only impactful on architectural terms, but that it was impactful as an artistic style during early modern Europe too.

These places of worship would be affected during the Reformation as Catholic Spain moved in on Protestant Netherlands.[10] Known in Dutch as "Beeldenstorm" or the "assault upon the images," bands of Spanish marauders attacked these churches by smashing windows, destroying paintings, and removing anything from the church that did not represent Catholicism.[11] With these places of worship destroyed, church congregations and members were forced to take up other buildings for service, thus changing the religious architecture for those in the Netherlands. Many religious groups were forced to continue their religion in secrecy—if they did not, they would face punishment from Spanish rule—which in turn birthed "schuilkerken," otherwise known as clandestine churches.[12] A famous example of these types of churches would be one that took place in the attic of an old merchant's house, appropriately named "Ons' Lieve Heer op Solder" or "Our Lord in the Attic," which could hold a little over one-hundred and fifty people.[13] Due to these churches' smaller interior, different Gothic architectural elements were implicated for both accommodation and aesthetic. For the example of the clandestine church "Our Lord in the Attic," that church had Gothic characteristics like side aisles, false bearings, and ribbed vaults.[14] Historian Benjamin J. Kaplan shows how there were dozens of clandestine

[9] Ibid.
[10] Herbert H. Rowen, "The Dutch Revolt: What Kind of Revolution?" *Renaissance Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (1990): 570, 582. doi:10.2307/2862560.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Kaplan, "Fictions of Privacy," 1034.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Fitchen, *The Construction of Gothic Cathedrals*, 310, 313-314; Kaplan, "Fictions of Privacy," 1033.

churches across the Netherlands, including five Mennonite, two Lutheran, and one Remonstrant recorded around Haarlem in 1620.[15] Even though these churches maintained some elements of Gothic architecture, the size difference was important because it showed that many different religions could not worship as openly as they used to. This architectural change was also significant during the Reformation because this movement of religious bodies sparked the beginning of the Dutch Revolt, which was created as a result of the Counter-Reformation.[16] Furthermore, this religious revolt to take back the churches that Spain had previously raided gave birth to Calvinism—a leading form of Protestantism—which became the prominent religion in the Netherlands.[17] At the end of 1648, both Spain and the Netherlands reached peace through the Treaty of Münster, which was signified when many clandestine church congregations took up the places of worship they once used before the Reformation.[18]

The series of events that made up the Reformation would not have extended over one hundred years if there was not a similar movement to challenge the spread of Protestantism. The Counter-Reformation was the spread of Catholicism across Europe and saw a significant architectural change within its places of worship. Much of this change was to develop the overall experience one feels when going to mass and appealed to faithful Catholic believers young and old. Historian Damien Tricoire credits a lot of the change in the Catholic church to a treatise written fifteen years before the beginning of the Counter-Reformation—this was "The Triple

[15] Ibid.
[16] Kemper Fullerton, "Calvinism and Capitalism," *The Harvard Theological Review* 21, no. 3 (1928): 171-172, http://www.jstor.org.cat1.lib.trentu.ca:8080/stable/1507668.
[17] Rowen, "The Dutch Revolt: What Kind of Revolution?" 571-572.
[18] Lotte Jensen, "Pre-modern Dutch Identity and the Peace Celebrations of 1748," in *Discord and Consensus in the Low Countries, 1700-2000* (London: UCL Press, 2016), edited by Fenoulhet Jane, Quist Gerdi, and Tiedau Ulrich, 6-19, http://www.jstor.org.cat1.lib.trentu.ca:8080/stable/j.ctt1g69z77.5.

Crown of the Mother of God" by French Jesuit François Poiré.[19] The treatise discussed how Mother Mary's love and goodness was the deciding factor as to who is saved and who is not; and as long as a person feels Mother Mary's love, they will be saved even if their life is not perfect. A lot of the overall success that the Catholic church saw during the Counter-Reformation can be devoted to the idea that the church was beginning to show that there was salvation for those who, even though they sin, are devout Catholics.[21]

Places like St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City is a phenomenal example of religious architecture before the Counter-Reformation.[22] With its construction beginning in 1506, the structure was created in a Baroque style, which highlighted its grandeur and reverence—John Merriman discussed how the architectural style was filled with "monumentalism, flamboyance and theatrical religiosity."[23] The architectural style of St. Peters Basilica, along with many other Catholic churches that were built before the Reformation, was made for members to feel like they were experiencing heaven on Earth. These churches had Baroque characteristics like an oculus, vaulted ceilings, and clerestory.[24] Also, inside of the churches were decorative objects like colourful paintings, marble altars, and golden cherubs to intensify one's emotions and express the buildings architectural design.[25] The combination of Baroque architecture and ornate,

[19] Damien Tricoire, "What Was the Catholic Reformation? Marian Piety and the Universalization of Divine Love," *The Catholic Historical Review* 103, no. 1 (2017): 20, https://muse.jhu.edu/ (accessed March 8, 2019).
[21] Ibid.
[22] Francis D. K. Ching, Mark Jarzombek, and Vikramaditya Prakash, *A Global History of Architecture* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 546.
[23] Charles B. McClendon, "The History of the Site of St. Peter's Basilica, Rome," *Perspecta* 25 (1989): 55, doi:10.2307/1567138; John M. Merriman, *A History of Modern Europe*. 3rd ed. Vol. 1. 2 vols. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 122.
[24] Fitchen, *The Construction of Gothic Cathedrals*, 308, 312, 315.
[25] John M. Merriman, *A History of Modern Europe*. 3rd ed. Vol. 1. 2 vols. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 123.

holy decorations served as the defining line separating Catholic churches from Protestant churches in early modern Europe.[26]

The Counter-Reformation aimed not only to defend Catholicism, but to bring back believers who may have converted to Protestantism, and to continue to try to bring in unbelievers in general. Art played a significant part in religious architecture as a form of early day "propaganda" according to author and professor Evonne Levy.[27] She discussed that in various forms of art during early modern Europe, like paintings, portrayed images of God over a Catholic churchor perhaps something more aesthetically pleasing to the eye like a large amount of art and ornate objects inside of a Catholic church.[28] Both examples showed the grandeur of the Catholic church in an attempt to bring people into the church body, but that was only half of the job. The other half of the job during the Counter-Reformation was to keep regular churchgoers in the church—this was accomplished through architecture by creating more unity inside of the church.[29] This was primarily done in three ways: the choir and the altar, abolishment of aisles, and niches.[30] First, the church congregation felt closer to those who partook in the singing and the sermon, as the area where the choir sang was no longer gated off, and the area around the altar (or the nave) became smaller so the congregation could sit closer to both the preacher and the altar.[31] Secondly, Catholic churches with baroque-style architecture began to remove the number of aisles and side aisles in the seating area, thus creating a more unified seating space where everyone felt included, and rarely anybody had to sit alone. Finally,

[26] R. G. Grant, et al., *The History Book* (New York, NY: DK Publishing, 2016), 152-153.
[27] Evonne Levy, *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California, 2004), 39.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Damien Tricoire, "What Was the Catholic Reformation? Marian Piety and the Universalization of Divine Love." *The Catholic Historical Review* 103, no. 1 (2017): 39. https://muse.jhu.edu/.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Fitchen, *The Construction of Gothic Cathedrals*, 311; Tricoire, "What Was the Catholic Reformation?" 39.

Catholic churches removed separate rooms or chapels holding alters and other ornate objects and put these objects in cubbyholes in the church walls, known as niches. This once again made people feel welcomed and integrated into the church because they had the privilege to see such holy things. This, in turn, brought faith closer to the believer, and fostered closeness between the church and the believer. This reformatted style of baroque architecture is what brought in new believers and kept old believers during the Counter-Reformation in early modern Europe, which can still be seen in western Europe to this day.

Like history, religious architecture had moments throughout time where its foundation was laid out to build upon as time goes on—an example of religious architectural history is the Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Foire, or Il Duomo, or the Florence Cathedral in Florence, Italy.[34] With its construction beginning in 1294, four years before the beginning of the Renaissance period (1300-1600), the cathedral itself was not what made this religious building historic.[35] Former clockmaker and goldsmith Filippo Brunelleschi was granted the opportunity to build the final piece of the cathedral that was not under construction yet, the dome.[36] The fact that a man with no architectural experience of any kind was granted this opportunity was revolutionary, but Brunelleschi was permitted to build the dome because of his daring plan. His plan consisted of creating the largest dome since the Roman period, which being one hundred and fourteen metres high, and one hundred and forty-three feet in diameter, is still the largest dome today.[38] On top of that, Brunelleschi decided to create the dome out of brick, stone, and wood but was not permitted to use any external buttresses to support the weight of the dome because that would hinder its

[34] Grant, et al., *The History Book*, 152-153.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ross King, *Brunelleschi's Dome: How a Renaissance Genius Reinvented Architecture* (Penguin Books, 2001), 42
[38] Grant, et al., *The History Book*, 153; King, *Brunelleschi's Dome*, 37

external design.[39] Many thought that this would be impossible, but Brunelleschi's ingenuity revolutionized Renaissance architecture.

Before Brunelleschi could worry about the architectural design of the dome, he had to worry about how the materials were going to get high above the ground in the first place. Brunelleschi invented revolutionary hoists and cranes that carried approximately seventy-million pounds of brick, stone, and wood into the air—his hoists and cranes would continue to be used throughout the Renaissance period.[40] Renaissance architecture in Florence embodied the city's thriving economy, largely due to their largest bank—the Medici Bank—allowing the state to create some of the largest forms of religious architecture in that time period.[41] The challenge with Renaissance architecture was figuring out how to create a larger structure that could support millions upon millions of pounds of stone, brick, and wood. For the dome of the Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Foire, Brunelleschi created an interior design that supported the encumbering weight of the dome and evenly distributed it so that it would not crush the architecture underneath it as well.[42] Domes prior to Renaissance architecture, during the Gothic period of architecture, would be made of much lighter material and would be supported by intersecting wooden beams on its interior.[43] Also, there was little to no need for there to be more than a few intersecting wooden beams because most cathedrals were not as large as the ones during the Renaissance period, which would evidently make the structure lighter in weight.[44] With the dome of the Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Foire, Brunelleschi created two interior domes: The

[39] Ibid
[40] Gustina Scaglia, "Building the Cathedral in Florence." *Scientific American* 264, no. 1 (1991): 70. http://www.jstor.org.cat1.lib.trentu.ca:8080/stable/24936755; Ross King, *Brunelleschi's Dome*, 65.
[41] Grant, et al., *The History Book*, 152.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Fitchen, *The Construction of Gothic Cathedrals*, 309.
[44] Ibid

larger one overlapped the smaller one, and they were connected by a system of interlocking beams and concentric arch rings to prevent them from breaking and/or expanding outwards.[45] Completed in 1436, the Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Foire built upon the characteristics of previous Gothic architecture including vaulting, pointed arches, and flying buttresses, while adding Renaissance characteristics like concentric arch rings and multiple interior domes to allow more artistic creativity without worrying about a structural malfunction.[46] Religious Renaissance-style structures were created both following and amidst horrifying events like the Bubonic Plague (1346-1352) and the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453). [47] Early modern European events like these directly affected cities like Florence, wreaking havoc upon the city with death and disease and filling the streets with chaos and despair. This form of architecture was created to rebuild places like Florence as an "ideal city" according to Merriman to show a brighter side of life and bring about hope and happiness in Florence during early modern Europe.[48]

Religion and history have one very important thing in common—they both tell a story of what was in the past. Religious architecture captures the progression of different forms of religion during different moments throughout history like the Dutch Revolution, the architectural makeover of Catholic churches during the Counter-Reformation, and the establishment of Renaissance architecture through the construction of the Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Foire as a

[45] Grant, et al., *The History Book*, 153; Fitchen, *The Construction of Gothic Cathedrals*, 309.
[46] Merriman, *A History of Modern Europe*, 63; Fitchen, *The Construction of Gothic Cathedrals*, 307, 310, 315.
[47] Colin McEvedy, "The Bubonic Plague," *Scientific American* 258, no. 2 (1988): 118, http://www.jstor.org.cat1.lib.trentu.ca:8080/stable/24988987; Helmut Hinck, and Bettina Bommersbach. "Cross-Border Representations of Revolt in the Later Middle Ages: France and England During the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453)," in *From Mutual Observation to Propaganda War: Premodern Revolts in Their Transnational Representations*, edited by Griesse Malte (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2014), 37, http://www.jstor.org.cat1.lib.trentu.ca:8080/stable/j.ctv1xxrvx.4.
[48] Merriman, *A History of Modern Europe*, 62.

result of tragic historical events. The effects of these events during the early modern period combined with the architectural strides of the time shifted religious bodies, uplifted emotional and religious states of mind, and established dominant churches in countries across Europe, all of which can still be seen today.

About the author

Hailing from London, Ontario, Luke Horton studies at Trent University where he majors in honors programs of both history and English literature, with special interests in Canadian history from 1700—1900 and European History from 1400—1800. He is the President of the Trent History in Community Club (THICC) where he aims to develop the growth of historical research and study throughout his campus. Luke as well is involved in multiple other clubs and programs, including the Academic Mentoring Program and the Trent English Student Society of Oshawa. In his spare time, he volunteers at the Robert McLaughlin Gallery where he aids in teaching youth about art and the history of the museum. After graduating, Luke aims to take his bachelor's degree to teacher's college and pursue a career as a high school teacher.

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